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Help Promised for OK's Highway Needs

Istook Brings Top Transportation Officials to OK

Washington, DC -- Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) led U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta and Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters on a tour of Oklahoma's most critical transportation projects Tuesday.

"Oklahoma has critical transportation needs because we're in the heart of America," said Istook. **"The condition of our roads impacts the whole country's transportation. I'm working to improve our roads, and it's a great help to have America's top two highway officials here in Oklahoma."**

During their visit, the two top federal transportation officials toured I-44 in Tulsa and the I-40 Crosstown Expressway in Oklahoma City and participated in roundtable discussions with transportation groups, government officials, and business leaders.

Mineta and Peters made the trip, the Secretary's first trip this year, at the invitation of Istook, the chairman of the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury.

Following the visit, Mineta expressed optimism regarding funding the I-40 project, **"The proposed replacement of the Crosstown Expressway is an important project for the people of Oklahoma. Chairman Istook has been a true leader in the development of this project, and I look forward to working closely with the Chairman to ensure its success."**

Peters also expressed enthusiasm about working with Istook on Oklahoma's transportation needs. **"It's an absolute pleasure to be here with Congressman Istook and to see firsthand the transportation challenges in Oklahoma,"** said Peters. **"I look forward to the opportunity to work with the Chairman on transportation appropriations to find solutions to Oklahoma's transportation problems."**

Gary Ridley, director of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, said of the visit, **"We are extremely pleased. Congressman Istook worked very hard to bring these top US officials to Oklahoma to see first-hand some of state's critical project needs. Not only has Congressman Istook been very helpful to Oklahoma in his new leadership role, his long-lasting support of the I-40 Crosstown project has been instrumental in helping ODOT pursue this vital work for the past several years."**

Replacing the Crosstown Expressway will be the most expensive transportation project in the state's history. The current cost estimate is \$350 million. Over \$100 million was secured by the

Oklahoma Congressional delegation in previous years. Istook says that securing the remaining \$250 million is among his top priorities.